



# BIG SKY LIBRARIES

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY



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*"It has been an honor to serve as a member of the Montana State Library Commission during a time of change and accomplishment."*

## Commissioners Corner by Dorothy Laird

Almost six years ago, Governor Racicot appointed me to the Montana State Library Commission. The first Commission meeting that I attended was also the first meeting attended by Karen Strege, who had just been hired as the Montana State Librarian.

As I prepare to leave the Commission when my second term expires in May, I find myself thinking about the many positive things that have occurred in the Montana library community during the past six years. None of these things would have happened without Karen's outstanding leadership or the support of the members of the State Library Commission.

Karen recommended the establishment of a Networking Task Force and a Law Revision Task Force. The Networking Task Force continues to guide the Commission in the use of LSTA funds and in the utilization of technology in libraries. It supported the creation of the Montana Library Network and the shared catalog projects. The Law Revision Task Force reviewed existing library laws and made recommendations for changes or additions. Positive outcomes from that task force were the passage of the



*Dorothy Laird,  
MSL Commissioner*

library district law and the changes encouraging multi-type participation in library federations. Another important legislative accomplishment was securing state funding for an on-line magazine database.

Other changes that have improved library services were the creation of three statewide technology positions, the emphasis on continuing education opportunities for library directors and staff, and the development of minimum standards for public libraries.

NRIS has become a more visible, useful component of the Montana State Library, and the Talking Book Library has improved services to its patrons.

It has been an honor to serve as a member of the Montana State Library Commission during a time of change and accomplishment. The eleven Commissioners with whom I have served have enhanced my life in many ways. Montana State Library staff are among the most dedicated people that I know, and it has been a pleasure to work with them. I am confident that the State Librarian, the MSL staff, and the Montana State Library Commission will continue to work to provide Montana's citizens with the excellent library service that they need and deserve.



**Karen Stregre**  
State Librarian

## A Word From Our State Librarian

Congress will soon consider the reauthorization of the federal assistance program for libraries, the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). Already scheduled for a hearing in the House, library land insiders predict relatively quick (remember we're talking about the Federal government) deliberation by Congress.

MSL administers LSTA funds; many of you are familiar with projects funded by LSTA, or its predecessor, the Library Services and Construction Act. Federal funds have supplemented the construction and remodeling of public library buildings, helped libraries purchase their first computers and then connected libraries to the Internet, to name a very few projects.

MSL also depends on federal funds for many of its services, including the staff

and services of the Library Development Department and many of the costs of the Talking Books Library. This use of federal funds to support MSL operations, while, of course, allowed by law, means that MSL has fewer federal funds to develop statewide, regional, or local projects to improve library services to citizens. We tried to move these basic operations to state funding in past budget cycles. We have not been successful. Yet!

For the past 40 years, the amount of federal funding to each state has been set using a two-part formula. Part of each state grant is a base amount that is the same for each state. Therefore, Montana receives as much as California. The other part of the formula is based on population and therefore, California receives much more funding than Montana.

The base grant amount

has not changed in 31 years. We are now asking the state grant to be doubled to \$680,000 a year, which is close to the total of this year's entire LSTA grant to Montana.

As you can see, reauthorization could mean more funding for important projects in Montana. As our local and state resources remain stagnant or in some cases, decrease, an increase in federal funding would be most welcome as Montana citizens continue to need and demand more resources and services from their libraries.

The most important action that you can take to secure this increase is to contact the offices of our Senators Burns and Baucus. The message is simple — to help improve library services in Montana please support the reauthorization of LSTA at \$500 million.

## Digital Recording System for MTBL

At its meeting on February 13, 2002, the MSL Commission unanimously approved the Montana Talking Book Library's (MTBL) proposal to use Trust Fund monies for the purchase and installation of a digital recording system for the Montana Cassette Book Recording Program. The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) is moving to a digital recording process and will be proceeding to a digital format for talking books in the next

five years. The purchase and implementation of the new computer equipment will allow MTBL to position itself to respond to whatever digital direction NLS decides to go. It also gives MTBL the ability to provide the best possible up-to-date quality and service to its patrons in our local recording program. Staff and volunteers are excited about the new equipment and the possibilities to improve our Montana books.

### Karen's Travel

#### Schedule

**April 10 —**

Commission Meeting in Helena

**April 25, 26 —**

MLA in Great Falls

**May 6, 7, 8 —**

ALA Washington DC

**May 10 —** BCR

Meeting in Denver

## Ride the Bus with Us

Have you been curious about what a countywide library system might mean for your community and patrons? Or, maybe librarians in your area have been wondering if there could be benefits to a district system since that structure is now possible in Montana. Well, seeing is believing! With that philosophy, MSL is planning bus tours to take public librarians, trustees and local officials to visit successful county and district libraries in two neighboring states. A spring trip will take a group that assembles in Billings to visit a county library system in northern Wyoming. A second trip, scheduled for fall, will take a group that assembles in Missoula to visit a district library sys-

tem in the Kootenai-Shoshone area of Idaho. Expenses for participants — charter bus ride with library-related entertainment and activities, meals, and overnight accommodations — will be paid with LSTA grant funds. Trips will leave on Friday morning and return on Saturday afternoon. Dates for the bus tours are:

- May 17-18 — Billings to Wyoming
- September 6-7 — Missoula to Idaho

Details will be coming out soon. If you have questions, please contact Sue Jackson at 1-800-338-5087 or [sujackson@state.mt.us](mailto:sujackson@state.mt.us).

## Fall Workshop 2002

Here's something for your calendars. Montana State Library's fourth annual Fall Workshop is scheduled for September 20-21 on the campus of Carroll College in Helena. Training topics and presenters are now being planned. As always, the Fall Workshop will be open to staff from all types of libraries and there is no registration fee. Details on registration and accommodations will come out later. Helena is a lovely place to be in the fall!

## LSTA Grant Award Received

The FY 2002 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant award has been received by Montana State Library from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal agency. The 2002 grant award is for \$753,357, an increase of \$181 from last year.

Using MSL's draft long-range plan, the Commission determined how the LSTA money could best be used in our state. At its February meeting, the Commission approved expenditure of these grant funds for a variety of activities, services and special projects:

- continued funding of State Library programs (staff and activities) such as the Library Development Department (this includes our three statewide technology librarians), the Montana Library Network, and the Talking Book Library;
- continued funding for the statewide Networking

Task Force that provides direction and planning on technology issues to the Commission;

- funding for training venues such as the Fall Workshop (see related article) and trustee workshops (tentatively planned for October);
- continued funding for the Montana Shared Catalog project;
- funding opportunities for public library staff, trustees and government officials to visit successful district/countywide library systems in Wyoming and Idaho [see article above]; and
- funding to employ a half-time information professional to create a statewide campaign to market library services.

In addition, the Commission left a portion of the FY 02 grant award unallocated at this time so that there would be funding available for any special projects that are identified later in the grant period.



Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks



MONTANA  
AUDUBON

## Montana Bird Distribution Web Site

The Natural Heritage Program, in cooperation with Montana Audubon and the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, recently unveiled a new version of the Montana Bird Distribution (MBD) web site. Created in 1991, this database contains breeding, migration, or wintering areas information about each species recorded in Montana. It also includes basic information on every bird record submitted – the who, what, when, and where. Specimen data and photographs are also stored in the database.

The new version of the MBD al-

lows easier and more robust queries of the information, more up-to-date information, as well as a new on-line bird sighting entry capability. The new version of the MBD is accessible from the Montana Natural Heritage web site at: <http://nhp.nris.state.us>.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program is part of the Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS), which was established seventeen years ago by the Legislature. NRIS, a division of the State Library, acts as a clearinghouse for natural resource information.

## MSL at MLA

Montana State Library staff is happy to join the general festivities and provide workshops at the annual conference. We hope to see you at one or more of the following!



**Thursday, April 25, 2002 - 8:30 to 10:00**

Karen Strege and two representatives from successful **library districts** in Idaho will give attendees first-hand information on the trials and successes of these types of libraries.

Bruce Newell and Mike Price join Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson to explore **technology gadgets** that will send your library sky high. You have been warned.

**Thursday, April 25, 2002 - 1:00 to 2:30**

**Acronym-challenged?** Be sure to attend "Alphabet Soup." Karen Strege joins Mary Bushing and Renee Goss to describe key elements in Montana's library scene.

**Thursday, April 25, 2002 - 2:45 to 4:15**

What is the **MLN gateway**? Let Bruce Newell tell you about the single-best link to

Montana's libraries.

**Friday, April 26, 2002 - 2:00 to 3:30**

Suzanne Reymer and Tracy Cook talk about **Internet safety for children**

**Friday, April 26, 2002 - 3:45 to 5:15**

**State Library highlights.** Karen Strege, Commission and staff review highlights from the past year and share plans for 2002-03.

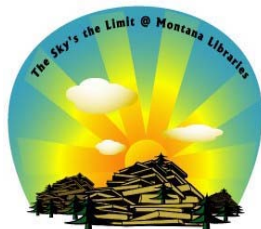
**Saturday, April 27, 2002 - 8:30 to 10:00**

Join Laurel Egan and Mike Price and learn how to **create a Web Page** using Adobe GoLive 5.

**Saturday, April 27, 2002 - 10:15 to 11:45**

Montana Talking Book Library's Susie Merrin and Moriah Haley demonstrate **digital recording equipment and the WebOPCAC**.

Duane Anderson shows how to create **customized maps** using NRIS information. Give your patrons a new way to locate information.



## Children's Services Consultant

MSL is now able to provide consulting on issues concerning children's services. MSL has contracted with a consultant to assist our Library Development Department (LDD) with this special service during the next year. Funds for the consultant come from FY 2001 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds originally allocated to the LSTA Advisory Council. Because the Council no longer meets, the savings was available to assign to another project.

The contract consultant is available only on a very limited basis. To track and screen requests for information on children's services, we would like for librarians to direct all questions first to our

LDD staff. Any questions that require greater expertise than we have available will be forwarded to the consultant for a direct response. Contact Tracy Cook, Bob Cooper or Suzanne Reymer with your children's services questions.

Topics the consultant can assist with might include planning popular and inexpensive programs, evaluating children's books, books and programs for babies, and simple stories to tell to young patrons. Also, the consultant is coordinating the 2002 Summer Reading Program in Montana and will represent our state at the 2002 Cooperative Summer Library Program meeting this spring to work on the development of the reading program for the following year.



## Gates Summer Institutes in 2002

Montana State Library will host three Gates Summer Institutes in 2002 with funds awarded from a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Training Program Grant for State Libraries.

Each Institute will present three days of training to public library staff to promote and enhance public access to technology resources. Training will be done in campus computer labs by professional trainers from BCR featuring hands-on basic and advanced levels. Topics will include Internet skills/reference use

(including InfoTrac and MLN), network management skills, web site creation and development, maximizing public access software, including those available on the Gates computers, and teaching the Internet to groups and individuals.

Gates Summer Institutes are scheduled for MSU-Bozeman, June 11-13; U of M-Missoula, July 9-11; and MSU-Billings, August 6-8. Enrollment will begin in April. Grant funds will be used to pay travel expenses, accommodations and meals for each participant.



*"Grant funds will be used to pay travel expenses, accommodations and meals for each participant."*

## School Library Grant Information Available

All AASL members, LAMA members and school library media specialists interested in a grant program that provides school library materials can register to receive information from the Department of Education by emailing: [literacyandschoollibraries@ed.gov](mailto:literacyandschoollibraries@ed.gov).

You can ask questions about the program of Maggie McFeeley at the same email address.

ALA believes that the more grant applications sent, the better the needs of school libraries' for better materials will be demonstrated.



## Big Sky Libraries

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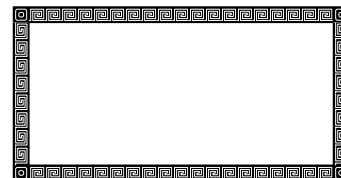
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WE'RE ON THE WEB!  
<http://msl.state.mt.us>

## Spotlight: John Heldt, Government Information Services Specialist

John A. Heldt joined the Library and Information Services Department [LISD] at MSL as the Government Information Services Specialist in June of 2000. He provides reference services for MSL patrons, keeps track of reference statistics, maintains the LISD web site, and teaches workshops on electronic resources.

John is a Portland native who grew up in a family with six kids in eastern Oregon and suburban Seattle. He earned his B.S. from the Uni-



*John Heldt, Government  
Information Services Specialist*

versity of Oregon, where he triple-majored in journalism, history, and political science. He lived four years in a fraternity used extensively in the 1978 movie "Animal House."

He graduated in 1985 and spent 11 of the next 12 years as an award-winning sports writer, columnist, and/or editor for four Northwest newspapers. He covered high school and college sports, with the occasional pro wrestling and greyhound racing diversion. John once interviewed golf greats Peter Jacobson and Chi Chi Rodriguez.

He switched careers in 1997, enrolling in the University of Iowa's Library and Information Science program. He graduated with an M.A. in 1999 and worked several months on the information desk at the Boise Public Library.

John married his college sweetheart, Cheryl, a former elementary school teacher and avid quilter, in 1986. They have three children — Heidi (fourth grade), Amy (first grade), and Matthew (preschool) — and a cat, Hunter.

In his off-time, John enjoys sports, photography, travel, bicycling, historical fiction, collecting memorabilia, cooking chili, and uploading his kids' artwork to the family web site.